

THE LONDON DAILY TELEGRAPH
12 February 1976

Leaders of Washington opinion may want to see the worst in their country, but the average American is loyal to the old values

AMERICA's friends and allies have been dismayed — and her adversaries bewildered, if not dangerously misled — by Washington's current seeming obsession with self-denigration.

To the year-long torrent of leaks about the alleged past misdeeds of the CIA, the FBI and other security services, have now been added embarrassing disclosures of diplomatic cables and revelations of corruption on an international scale in the aircraft industry.

The fact that Mr Patrick Moynihan reckoned that the career bureaucrats in the State Department had tried — albeit in vain — to thwart his robust policy of talking back to the Russians and the more tedious Third Worlders in the United Nations was no secret. But that the entire text of his report to Dr Kissinger on the subject should be printed in the *New York Times* must inevitably discourage foreign diplomats from communicating frankly with Americans in future.

Whether Prince Bernhard took a \$1 million gift from Lockheed or not is not really the point either: the headlines this allegation have made will make any friendly Defence Minister think hard before recommending a purchase of any American fighter in future for fear of being suspected of accepting bribes.

What foreigner dare pass information to American intelligence, even for the best of motives, now that it has been established that he is liable to be named by some political defector from the CIA?

It must certainly seem on the evidence that America's elected representatives and their staffs cannot keep secrets. They have engaged in a new kind of McCarthyism in recent months in the intelligence committees of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, dredging up one scandal after another in an orgy of denunciations of past errors, real or imaginary, as if thereby to purge the entire nation of its supposed wickedness.

The sound grass roots of America

By STEPHEN BARBER

All this stemmed, of course, from Watergate, and Vietnam. One might have thought that after ousting former President Nixon in disgrace and successfully prosecuting his chief co-conspirators, Washington's high-minded puritans would have been assuaged. But not a bit of it. When they had done with the Nixon era, they began to turn — with rather less enthusiasm, perhaps — to the sins of the Kennedy and Eisenhower eras. The CIA's assassination plots were bared. So were stories of how the agency gave money to anti-Communist political parties and individuals in various countries to the vast discomfort of these hapless folk.

The context in which all this took place was conveniently overlooked by the Congressional zealots: American liberals readily forget for example, that when the Kennedy Camelot was in flower only 15 years ago it was thought to be a good thing to be sending Green Beret Special Forces cloak-and-dagger teams to Indo-China to help with "nation-building." The CIA was not then looked on as a wicked organisation but a high-minded one, fighting nobly for freedom and democracy against the forces of evil in the back alleys of the world.

Outsiders looking on may well have wondered whether America has gone mad. What is even more alarming — for those of us who rely, in the final analysis, on the ability of this the most powerful of nations economically and (so far) militarily to act as a counterweight to Russia — is the thought that it had lost its will and sense of national purpose.

Mr Nixon used to employ the image of "a helpless giant"; he was determined that America should never be so perceived. But in many ways his fears on that score may now seem about to be

Having said this, however, I am glad to be able to report that once one gets out of Washington and into the heartland of the real America one is swiftly reassured that things are nothing like as bad as they look. A recent *Daily Telegraph* leading article deploring the seemingly suicidal mood reflected among the so-called opinion-makers of the Eastern Establishment was widely reprinted in newspapers across the country — and approvingly. Mr Ford, campaigning in New Hampshire for the Republican Presidential nomination over the weekend, was cheered most lustily whenever he called for an end to the self-destructive tendencies displayed in recent Congressional witch-hunts.

Angry with Congress

Ordinary Americans are increasingly angry with Congress about all this. And it is significant that the first victory Mr Ford scored this year was the vote by the full House to withhold publication of the Intelligence Committee's report on the CIA last month. True, the contents had leaked so copiously that publication was by that time almost superfluous, but what mattered surely was that members had got the hard word from their constituencies that voters were up in arms at what they felt to be an unnecessary, and above all unpatriotic, washing of dirty linen.

A thoughtful Wisconsin farmer whom I met last week on a trip to California expressed genuine surprise when I told him that many of America's friends were worried about the seemingly endless self-abasement indulged in by Washington's legislators in recent months. It had not occurred to him, he said, that it could lead others to doubt America's commitment to its ideals or even to its allies. "This is such a big country," he said, recalling that his father had come from

continued